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PALESTINE in CRISIS

by Freda Kirchwey

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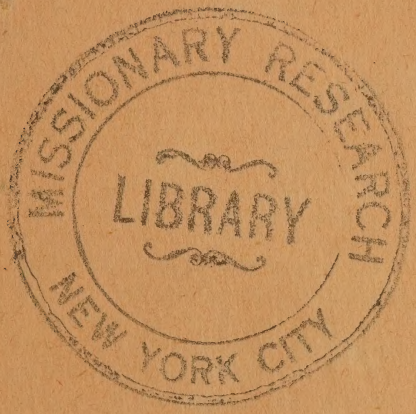

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Palestine and Bevin

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Cairo, June 15

I HAVE seen no report of the American reaction to the Palestine remarks made by Bevin at Bournemouth, but read here in the context of events in the Levant, in Egypt, and in Palestine itself, they seemed most ominous. For a Foreign Minister to say that "the agitation in the United States . . . for 100,000 Jews to be put into Palestine is because they do not want too many of them in New York" is to offer an unjust and untrue simplification of a complex problem; it is hard to believe that Bevin would have ventured it if he were not casting about for an alibi to cover his own failure to meet the issue. Also when he says, "If you have to raise the Arabs' life to the standard of the Jews, you cannot do it if you take away their land," he is distorting both the recommendations of the Inquiry Committee and the intentions of the Jews. But more significant and disturbing was Bevin's assertion that "if we put 100,000 Jews in Palestine tomorrow I would have to put another division of troops there," coupled with the demand for the Jews and Arabs to lay down their arms. Reading this, one realizes how little Bevin has learned from the inquiry, indeed from the long record of British colonial policy: he still believes that order is a prerequisite to policy, an idea easily converted into the theory that order is a substitute for policy. This mistake was responsible for the Black and Tan terror in Ireland, for the Amritsar massacre, and for a dozen other bloody events easy to recall. If persisted in, it will have the same ugly results in Palestine.

For almost five weeks I have been watching developments and talking to informed people—Jews, Christians, Moslems—in Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt, and I am sure that if real trouble starts it will not be because 100,000 Jews are brought to Palestine but because of the stalling and hedging of the British government, its painful reluctance to apply any clear-cut policy, and the behavior of many of its agents, military and civilian, who do everything but openly invite an Arab revolt. As days pass without a decision on Palestine, the Moslem world becomes more and more convinced that blackmail pays and that the Western powers can be frightened into sacrificing the Jews just as they have already abandoned the Christians in Lebanon. The country the

Arabs are uneasy about is the United States. They believe that if 100,000 Jews come to Palestine it will be because Truman insists they come. They know that an uncompromising stand in Washington, backed by solid promises of material help, would go far to offset Arab threats and the warnings of Bevin's advisers out here.

If our government takes such a stand, it will alter in a most salutary way the balance of forces in the eastern Mediterranean. But I wonder whether we can be counted on to do it. We are not accustomed to following an independent line, and we depend heavily on the British for the defense of our interests. Nor are we immune to Arab propaganda. Today at Payne Field, a huge airport outside of Cairo which our government has just sold to Egypt, I encountered several American oil men on their way home from Arabia. They agreed that Ibn Saud was an old fox and had scared Standard Oil to death by threatening to destroy installations in the oil fields and to end concessions if we did not quit supporting the Jews. "Would he do it?" I asked. They didn't know but thought he figured he wouldn't have to; he counted on threats to turn the trick. "He could wreck the whole works in three hours," one of them said. "But then of course he wouldn't get the money." Concessions are the lifeblood of Oriental absolutism, and Ibn Saud is perhaps more fox than fanatic.

I have been much disappointed by the recent words of another Britisher, R. H. S. Crossman, a good writer and a member of the Inquiry Committee who is supposed to have been working hard—with indifferent success, one must conclude — to convert Messrs. Attlee and Bevin to the report. In Palestine Crossman was generally regarded as the ablest member of the committee. This being the case, I wonder why he should have taken particular pains, in a talk the other day at the London School of Economics, to ridicule the American role in relation to Palestine. When he rejected the idea of British-American condominium—proposed by nobody so far as I know—by saying that " it is difficult enough to run the country under the Colonial Office, but it would be quite impossible under a Tammany regime," I could not help recalling somewhat cynically the massive rolls of barbed wire I saw festooning every British official building in Palestine, and the iron censorship, and the political prisoners, also behind barbed wire. Against this backdrop Tammany seemed by contrast quite like the benevolent society it was originally supposed to be. But what I found more gratuitous and

politically rather questionable was Crossman's remark, greeted with "laughter," that "poor Truman was neatly caught when he demanded the entry of 100,000 and was asked by Bevin to send American commissioners," and his further ironic comment on the anxiety of Americans, including the American Jews, to deflect Jewish immigration toward Palestine.

I do not intend to dispute these points; I want only to suggest that Bevin's speech indicates the political use to which such remarks are bound to be put. Assuming that Crossman was honest in his desire to win Cabinet approval for the report, his chances were hardly improved by a deliberate attempt to discredit American influence. If Truman was tricked by Bevin, it would seem good strategy in a political fight to welcome the support of Washington rather than undermine it, especially since the most encouraging note in Bevin's discussion of Jewish immigration to Palestine was the suggestion that Britain and the United States should together consider implementation of the report.

But the Foreign Minister's statements at Bournemouth demand examination on their merits. Is it true that the arrival of 100,000 Jewish D. P.'s would necessitate another division of British troops? To a recent visitor in Palestine the assertion sounds like convention oratory. I do not know how many divisions are already there or, indeed, whether the entire British and American armies combined could prevent guerrilla attacks by armed and bitter citizens. The German army could not do it in France. But I know that Palestine is an occupied country from end to end. Jews and Arabs alike live under military rule while civilian officials shelter behind sandbags and armed guards. In Barclay's Bank in Jerusalem a Tommy armed with a machine-gun is prominently posted on the balcony overlooking the main room. Press censorship is complete. No explanation need be given for suspensions or prohibitions. The following item, printed while I was in Jerusalem shows how it is done:

> *Haifa, Saturday.* The editor of the local afternoon paper, *Zohorayim,* was informed that "the High Commissioner in Council, being of the opinion that matter appearing in said paper is likely to endanger the public peace," has ordered its suspension for a fortnight.

Arrests are frequently made under similar emergency decrees.

Though I had read about the concentration of military and police forces in Palestine, I had no idea

until I went there how overpowering it had become. Convoys of British tanks and trucks move along the roads holding up civilian traffic. The public barracks, located at strategic points only a few miles apart, are really forts, concrete structures formidable in size and solidity, and everywhere one sees contingents of the Transjordan Frontier Force, Arab troops originally recruited for the purpose the name implies, policing towns and highways in Palestine; nothing could be better calculated to provoke Jewish resentment.

But if Bevin really needs that extra division, one might remind him that he is pledged to the withdrawal of the whole British naval and military establishment now stationed here in Egypt. The size of these forces is not public property, but the British-owned *Egyptian Gazette* today gives 50,000 as "near the mark"—surely a conservative figure. When negotiations with Egypt are happily ended, Bevin will have two or three extra divisions to send to Palestine, which Britain obviously intends to make its chief stronghold in the Middle East. In the light of these facts I think we need not take too seriously Bevin's military worries.

The real question is the one asked at the beginning: can the British government achieve order in Palestine by continuing to pile up force, while encouraging the Arabs to resist even the recommendations of its own Committee of Inquiry? If a peaceful Palestine is what Bevin wants, it is hard to explain the behavior, for example, of Glubb Pasha—a man who seems to have been clipped, name and all, right out of Kipling. Glubb Pasha is the British brigadier commanding the Arab Legion in Transjordan and is besides Deputy Inspector General of Police for Palestine. In a recent interview Glubb announced flatly that if the committee report is implemented, "British will be at war with the Arab League." "I doubt," said the Pasha, "whether the British forces available are adequate to enforce the committee's recommendations. . . . Palestine would become the scene of murder, sabotage, severed communications, and convoy attacks. In Arab countries outside of Palestine disturbances would take the form of pogroms, attacks on British subjects and premises, and sabotage of Anglo-American oil concerns." Glubb Pasha concluded by calling for twelve to fifteen divisions to handle the situation.

This sort of "warning" is, of course, an open invitation to Arab extremists to launch a holy war. As the Palestine *Post* put it, his statement was "an in-

citement to mass pillage and murder . . . and to war against his own country."

Glubb's is only a flamboyant example of a point of view which largely dominates the British ruling group in Palestine. Little as Arab leaders like British control, it is none the less heavily weighted on their side. Today this is more than ever true, since the bitter events in Europe and the restrictions of the White Paper have combined to drive the Jews to acts of resistance which are entirely alien to their tradition. Terrorism is still regarded with profound disapproval by official Jewish opinion, but the effort to build and equip a strong defense force and to smuggle refugees through the immigration barriers is universally applauded. A Zionist would no more oppose illegal immigration or Haganah than a patriotic Frenchman would have opposed the F. F. I. during the Nazi occupation. Terrorist acts will increase as long as the present state of suspense continues. And the tactics used by jittery police officials and the military have the effect of creating sympathy for the terrorists —still only a handful—and weakening the authority of responsible leaders.

I could multiply the instances of bias against Jews displayed by British officials. One which came to a climax while I was in Jerusalem will serve as an illustration. On May 1 a government communiqué reported that a kitbag packed with explosives had been found over the magazine of H. M. S. Chevron in Haifa harbor, with detonators fitted, and that "thirteen Palestinian naval ratings" had been arrested, explosives being found on several of them. The story was dressed up with colorful details: one of the arrested men was described as "a well-known terrorist" and the ship as having been engaged in intercepting illegal immigrants. In London the *Daily Telegraph* headed the story "Attempt to Blow up Destroyer" and converted the thirteen Palestinians into thirteen Jewish ratings. It appeared on the day the inquiry recommendations were published. By the time I reached Palestine the accused had faced court-martial and one Jewish sailor had been found guilty of illegal possession of explosives. What was interesting was the collapse of the story put out by the Palestine Information Office. The detonators were not fitted; the position of the kitbag was found to have been accidental; the "Palestinian ratings" were Cypriot, Arab, Armenian, and Jewish; the "several" with explosives became one; no attempt to blow up the warship was found. The offender is in prison. But the P. I. O. official who doctored the story is presumably

still carrying on as usual. Such tactics, applied day after day and in every relationship, insure the continuance of tension and bitterness in Palestine and make nonsense of Bevin's demand that the Jews and Arabs disarm.

Will the Arabs Revolt?

(In The Nation of July 13, 1946)

THE FEROCITY of the British military attack on the Jewish establishments in Palestine can be explained only by panic or by a desire to prove that the situation is too tense and unstable to permit the admission of 100,000 new immigrants. Perhaps both emotions are involved.

When I was in Palestine last month, panic was plainly observable in British reactions. Official alarm seemed out of proportion even then to the isolated acts of violence committed by Jewish extremists. And the authorities were unwilling to acknowledge any distinction between terrorist acts, condemned by all but a small minority of Jews, and those other illegal operations, such as the smuggling of immigrants and the organization of defense forces, which had the support and approval of the whole Jewish community. The British in Palestine behaved as if they went in deadly fear of the Jews; the provocative warnings of Glubb Pasha mentioned in my last article, although more hysterical in tone than the comments of ordinary officials, were otherwise typical. Their composite attitude was something like this: "We must at all costs put an end to Jewish resistance and if possible prevent any new immigration; otherwise we shall have war arising out of the justified resentment of the Arab majority."

How realistic are these fears? Would the admission of more Jews into Palestine actually touch off civil war or, even more terrifying, start a general Islamic revolt? Such questions must be answered before one passes final judgment on British behavior.

From the day the Joint Inquiry Committee's report was issued, Arab leaders and the Arab press have carried on a steady campaign of threats and protests. They have promised everything from local acts of terror to a Holy War. A collection of newspaper headlines over the last three months indicates that the city room of an Arab newspaper has no lessons

to learn from Mr. Hearst. One of the most imaginative appeared above the story of Truman's first statement on the Palestine report: "Hitler Has Been Found Alive—In The White House!"

It is instructive, however, to contrast the fury of the press, and of leaders aiming their words at public opinion, with the reserve displayed in private conversation as well as in the decisions reached at the recent Arab conferences at Inchass and Bludan. In Jerusalem I talked to the two most influential Arab leaders then in the country. The first, Auni Bey Abdul Hadi, is a man whose volcanic flood of oratory conceals genuine patriotic feeling. He is an old hand at the nationalist game, having attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 with Feisal and participated in various subsequent negotiations with the British. He knows the documents by heart and lays the pertinent passages before you. The mandate Auni Bey does not recognize; it was illegal, since the Arabs were promised independence. But even granting the validity of the mandate, its execution by the British has been in violation of the League Covenant. Whereas Iraq and later Transjordan had their own governments under Britain, and Syria and Lebanon theirs under France, Palestine has been ruled directly by the British like a crown colony. "This, of course, is because the Jews were colonized in our country for Britain's imperialist purposes and they had to be protected by British arms."

But Britain is the old adversary, accepted and almost tolerated—like Satan in the Christian theology. The whole explosive fury of Auni Bey's invective was aimed at the United States. He shook his finger under my nose and asked what business the United States had coming into Palestine and running its affairs, installing a plan that would "kill the Arabs?" "Kill?" I asked. "Will 100,000 additional Jews kill the Arabs?" He did not stop to explain but from the general direction of his talk I gathered that more Jewish immigration would, in his opinion, squeeze the Arabs off their land, create a non-Arab life in Palestine, and end age-long established customs and relationships. "You can do this," he said. "With money, with the atom bomb, America can kill every Arab who protests because the promises have all been broken and the foreigners have been forced into this country. Is that what you wish?" I could not have offered a defense of the Committee's report or of America's role if I had tried, for Auni Bey's questions were strictly rhetorical. I only asked, because this

was what I had hoped to hear from him, whether he and the other Arab leaders had agreed on a specific plan of action in case the Committee's report was accepted in London. I got no real reply but only deflected a little the direction of the flow. "What can we do? You can kill us. We can die. What else? We are not prepared to wage war against Britain and the United States and the Jews. But in time, we will be vindicated. If it takes a thousand years, justice will finally be done." And then, a little abruptly he mentioned Russia. "We don't wish to call upon Stalin for help. But if necessary we can do so." "What about the United Nations?" I asked. "Will the Arab League lay the Palestine issue before the Council or the Assembly?" To this question Auni Bey gave no answer. What was evident from his conversation was the uncertainty that lay behind his genuine indignation.

From one of the other leaders, a very different man, I got the same impression. Dr. Hussein Khalidi, formerly Mayor of Jerusalem, is a successful lawyer and a member of the Arab Higher Executive. He is as quiet and smooth as Auni Bey is violent. He talks with you, meets objections, appears to weigh arguments. He, too, leans heavily on documents, and uses them well. He showed me the verbatim testimony, never published, taken at the London Conference in 1939 which resulted in the White Paper. He was there as one of the Palestine Arab delegates. At this meeting Malcolm MacDonald promised, without the slightest equivocation, in answer to detailed questions by himself and another delegate, that the Arabs would have permanent and final control over Jewish immigration after five years; during that period 75,000 Jews would be admitted under the British plan. If the quota were not filled during the alloted time, the remainder would not be admitted after the period ended. It was there, black on white, question and promise. On the record the Arabs have an unanswerable case. (And so, of course, have the Jews; and the issue therefore cannot be decided on the record at all, but must be dealt with, as the Joint Committee honestly attempted to do, on its political and human merits.)

Khalidi, like Auni Bey, having proved his point and expressed his profound distaste for American interference, became vague as to Arab policy. He predicted trouble—but how much and what sort, he didn't say. Would the other Arab states help the Palestinian Arabs?, I asked. He wouldn't commit

himself on that either. Both leaders were restrained by their knowledge that the meeting at Inchass of the Arab kings and chiefs of state, then in progress, was debating this very problem, and by the more intimate fact that the Palestinian Arab parties had just split into two "higher" committees over the question of appealing to the United Nations.

The decisions reached at Inchass were never fully disclosed, but when the Arab League met in extraordinary session at Bludan on June 8 to consider the Palestine issue, the press announced that it was acting, not as an independent policy-making body, but under directives from the Arab rulers. In fact, the secretary-general of the Arab League, Abdul Rahman Azzam, himself declared that the League had become the "executive agent" of the Arab chiefs of state. After a series of defiant and deafening speeches, the League went into closed session and at last emerged with a program which must have disappointed the pan-Arab fire-eaters. Talk of a Holy War had disappeared altogether; so had the expected demand for Palestine independence. No mention was made of an appeal to the United Nations for action against the Committee's report. The resolutions adopted merely called for the creation of a committee representing all the Arab states to "supervise all questions concerning Palestine"; the setting up in Palestine of a new Arab Higher Executive to supercede or unite the two competing "higher" committees; the demobilization and disarming of all Jewish troops (no mention of Arab military organizations); and various proposals to end land sales to Jews and strengthen the boycott of Jewish goods.

Arab nationalism is a real force. No one who has been in Egypt and the Levant can deny it. It does not go as deep as its leaders want you to think but it has enough popular backing so that foreigners, and non-Moslems, foreign or native, face growing hostility in Moslem countries. The poor masses in the villages are probably almost unaware of the issue; in the cities there is plenty of explosive material for the politicians to use. Nationalist feeling backed up and inflamed by religious fanaticism is unquestionably growing.

Will it explode in Palestine? This is the question raised in acute form by British action there. To me the answer seems so obvious that I find it hard to take seriously the feverish warnings of British officials and Arab propagandists. The caution displayed by the Arab leaders when they sit down to consider pol-

icy is far more convincing. Unless all political signs fail, no general rising of Arabs would result from the application of the Committee's proposals. Doubtless there would be sporadic attacks and local disorders, though even these would, I am convinced, be reduced by the general respect in which the Jewish defense organization is held. But no Holy War, no invasion from neighboring countries, not even civil war in Palestine.

Britain may be executing a slow retreat in the Middle East: its economic hold may be threatened by American competition, its ultimate political control by Russian penetration. But the Empire has enormous staying power and up to the present time it has been able to manipulate the ambitions of Arab leaders, and especially the divisions among them, to buttress its strategic positions.

No Arab state or combination of states can start a war in Palestine without British connivance. The Arab leaders know this well; they may bark loudly, but they have very few teeth to bite with. Egypt will never endanger its present negotiations with Britain by seriously involving itself in Palestine. King Farouk has huge ambitions, encompassing the whole Arab world. But his present need is to win a diplomatic triumph through the withdrawal, on favorable terms, of British forces from Egypt. Farouk is playing a cagey game and doing everything politically possible to minimize—while using—the growing Xenophobia of opposition parties and fanatic organizations like the Moslem Brotherhood. No Holy War will start in Egypt in the early future.

Transjordan's newly crowned king, Abdullah, is in Britain's pocket—not only because the whole independence farce was staged and run off by the British; not only because the treaty with Britain secures that power's predominant interest; but above all because Transjordan's army is officered by Britishers and is in fact an integral part of Britain's armed forces in the Middle East. To imagine an incursion from Transjordan into Palestine without Britain's consent is a little difficult. In Iraq, British control is only a little less overt. Since the overthrow of Rashid Ali in 1941, the Iraqi government and army have operated under strict British supervision.

There remain Syria and Lebanon. Ostensibly independent since the French were evicted, these countries might possibly cause trouble across the border. Syria is now militantly pan-Arab and has taken the lead in boycotting Jewish goods from Palestine.

Lebanon, torn between Arab propaganda and the fears of the Christian population, is more inhibited. But both are deeply beholden to the British. The liquidation of French control was accomplished by a series of maneuvers which have never been fully exposed. In the process, local politicians, bought and paid for, were established in power by their new overlords. The financial by-products of office are great in the Levant and it will be some time, I imagine, before these officials will think it discreet to kick over the traces. If they did, their ability to make trouble in Palestine would be severely restricted by the almost complete collapse of the Levantine armies since the French moved out.

Apart from direct British influence, however, there are all sorts of minor pressures at work to prevent united Arab action in Palestine. The Arab states may adopt a common attitude on Jewish immigration, but they can never stage a general revolt as long as they continue to be split by cross-currents of interest and feeling. King Farouk's ambition to dominate an inclusive Arab union—even to revive the Caliphate—is in direct conflict with King Abdullah's ambition to rule over a Greater Syria comprising Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Transjordan, a plan supposedly encouraged by the British. Both projects are opposed by Ibn Saud, absolute monarch of Arabia, who looks upon himself as the legitimate leader of the Moslem world and nourishes an ancient feud with the Hashimite family, to which Abdullah belongs. Even within the Greater Syria orbit, the interests of Abdullah clash with those of many Syrian politicians who benefit from their country's role as an "independent" republic with a seat in the United Nations.

If an Arab revolt on a big scale is out of the question, as I believe these facts indicate, how can one explain the fears of British officials in Palestine and the ugly events of the past week? The answer is to be found in the history of Arab blackmail and British appeasement. During the years before the outbreak of war, Nazi agents in every Arab country spread the charge that the British intended to subject the Moslems to Jewish domination. Arab attacks on Jewish settlements in the late '30's were largely the product of this untiring propaganda, and by the end of 1938 the Colonial Office had pretty well convinced the government that the loyalty of Jewish Palestine would be more than offset, in case of war, by the hostility of the Arab chieftains. Quite abruptly, and without regard for past commitments, the British in-

stituted a sweeping program of appeasement. For the first time Arab notables were invited to join in discussions of the Palestine problem. Then the whole policy based on the Balfour declaration and embodied in the Mandate was reversed by the provisions of the White Paper. Through these moves the British hoped to counter Axis propaganda and insure the loyalty of the Arabs.

The results of this maneuver are well remembered. With very few exceptions Arab leaders in Palestine and outside were either openly pro-Axis or unreliable and shifting in their allegiance. The behavior of the Mufti—today again at large and ready to resume his dominant role in the Middle East—was only a dramatic expression of the general Arab attitude.

But the failure of appeasement during the war did not discourage the engineers of Britain's colonial policy. Victory wiped out the power of the Axis; it did not guarantee the security of the Empire. In the offing they see the looming threat of Soviet power pressing toward the warm-water ports and oil resources of the Middle East. A bloc of Arab states linked to Britain by concessions, favors, and a well-grounded fear of communism still seems to the conventional colonial mind the best available bulwark against Russia's penetration.

Such hopes would be frustrated by the growth of Jewish strength in Palestine. For the energy and progressive social program of the Jews menace, far more imminently than does Russia, the hierarchic feudalism of the Moslem world from which the Arab ruling class derives its wealth and power. To encourage the Jews would be to plant dynamite under that decadent system. It would make further appeasement impossible. If the Arab leaders cannot stage a revolt, they can make plenty of trouble of other sorts. They might even, as a maneuver in power politics, carry out their threat and call upon Russia for help. The frightened colonial official sees these possibilities crowding in on him, and his single impulse is to step on the Jews. Heaven knows he does not want social change any more than the Arabs; he wants the old system and men on top with whom he can make satisfactory deals. If military force can do it, and if Mr. Bevin continues to back him up, he will wipe out the Jewish defense forces while there is still time and stop the smuggling of D. P.'s from Europe. And with his last breath he will oppose the recommendations of the Joint Committee of Inquiry.

Obligations in Palestine

(In The Nation of July 27, 1946)

AS DISCUSSIONS on the Palestine issue proceed in London behind sealed doors, it is important for Americans to keep in mind a few basic facts. If we forget them we are likely to fall into a mood of exaggerated compunction which will help neither our own position nor those of the peoples more directly involved.

The first of these facts is that the Mandate for Palestine, with its explicit obligations to the Jews, was accepted by Britain for obvious political reasons. If altruistic ends were served they were, let us admit without reproach, incidental or at least subsidiary. But the obligations were undertaken none the less and the adoption in 1939 of the policy described in the White Paper, whatever its immediate justification in terms of imperial strategy, in no way absolved Britain of a commitment which had been accepted by both the League of Nations and the United States as one of the basic conditions of the Mandate. The White Paper merely violated the terms of the Mandate, as the League declared and as leading British statesmen, including the present Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, and his predecessor, Mr. Churchill, charged at the time. A mandate is not a private enterprise to be administered as a person might administer his country estate; it is an international public trust and its violation is every nation's business.

The facts that financial support for the Jewish National Home has come largely from the United States, and that our large Jewish population overwhelmingly favors the Zionist development admittedly give this country no special political rights in Palestine. They do, however, create a special interest which is legitimate as well as inevitable and which has always been admitted by Britain. That the voting strength of Jews, especially in large centers like New York and Chicago, has influenced the attitude of the Administration and of both major parties cannot even be questioned; I wonder in what democratic country this would not be the case. Jewish influence has served partly to offset contrary pressures, such as those of the great oil interests, in determining this nation's policy in Palestine and the Middle East generally. It is a political factor which must be given its full weight in analyzing the balance of forces in America; but only an anti-Semite would be tempted to convert it into an accusation.

When the President proposed that Palestine admit 100,000 displaced persons from Europe, he had no reason to think that his advice would be considered an intrusion into Britain's national affairs; nor indeed had he any right to assume that the Labor Government was intending to continue in Palestine a policy for which it had bitterly attacked the Tories. The Labor Party had been explicit in its campaign promises: it was committed to the abolition of the White Paper. Like liberals in other countries, British Labor had taken the view that the Empire's interests would be served rather than injured by carrying out the purposes of the Mandate; and the plight of Europe's surviving Jews, and even the difficulty and expense of providing a minimum of protection and food for those who had flocked into the D. P. camps in the British and American zones of occupation, counseled speedy action. Once in office, however, and confronted with the intransigence of Colonial officials in Palestine and the threats of Arab agitators, the Labor ministers drew back from the logic of their own arguments. The Anglo-American Joint Committee of Inquiry was called into being to serve several purposes at once: first, to delay a final decision; second, to commit the United States to the proposition that if it wanted to give advice, it should also be prepared to accept responsibility; and third, to acquaint the United States at first hand with the thorny difficulties in the way of the mandate.

How far the British Government hoped also to implicate this country in the actual defense and administration of Palestine still remains a question. But from our point of view, participation in the Joint Inquiry committed us to nothing beyond the terms of the inquiry itself, and the unanimous report which resulted assumed the continuing responsibility of the British Government as the mandatory power. Only after the report had been published, and after Mr. Truman had reiterated his hope that at least the recommendation to admit 100,000 refugees would be promptly carried out, was the idea that America should become permanently involved in Palestine put forward in England.

Never has this idea been fully explored. Its first official appearance was in Mr. Attlee's speech of May 1 in which he said that "His Majesty's Government wish to be satisfied that they will not be called upon to implement a policy that would involve them single-handed in such commitments, and . . . they wish to ascertain to what extent the government of

the United States will be prepared to share the resultant military and financial responsibilities." It has cropped up since then in various forms, official and otherwise. And by repetition and gradual extension it is coming to imply that America has no business to press for action in Palestine unless it is prepared to back up such action with arms.

This implication the United States should refuse to tolerate. Assuming for the purposes of discussion that Britain has a right to request American military help in carrying out its policy in Palestine—an assumption which would, I believe, be sharply challenged in the Security Council—we have an equal right to consider such a proposal strictly on its merits. Nothing we have said or done about Palestine imposes upon us an obligation to say yes. And if we decide to say no, we do not thereby forfeit our right—which is also a duty—to insist that Britain live up to the terms of the mandate under which it governs Palestine. Nothing could be more unfortunate than to allow ourselves to be jockeyed into a position where we feel we must keep our mouths closed or dispatch an armed force to Haifa. A "put up or shut up" attitude in London won't help soften Anglo-American tension.

On the other hand, not as a quid pro quo but as a contribution to good relations and an early solution of the refugee problem, we should recognize Britain's anxieties and do what we can to mitigate them. First of all we should erase the impression that we intend to sit back with our heels on the table offering advice while Jews, Arabs, and British slug it out in Palestine, and Russia watches from the side-lines. The United States has already offered to undertake the transfer of the 100,000 D.P.'s, if they are admitted to Palestine, and provide funds for their settlement and rehabilitation. American Jewish agencies have promised full support, and enormous sums of money have already been raised to enable the Jewish community in Palestine to absorb the refugees with as little internal dislocation as possible. But this is not enough. What the United States must do if it is to reassure even the most friendly and pro-Zionist Labor people in England, is to indicate a willingness to help solve the tangled problems of the Middle East of which Palestine is only the most unyielding. British leaders know very well that powerful economic interests, notably oil and aviation, strongly opposed to the Committee report and the President's attitude, are doing their best to undermine both. They know that

key men in the State Department and in diplomatic posts in the Middle East are bitterly anti-Zionist and can be counted upon to encourage Arab resistance to any change of policy. Leaders like Laski who are trying to induce their government to accept the report would be immensely helped if they could believe the United States would stand firm, after election day as well as before, and would refuse to take advantage of Britain if the ending of Arab appeasement should result in penalties to British interests.

Above all, our position would be strengthened in England and in Palestine if we were to agree to accept a fair proportion of those European Jews who wish to emigrate but do not insist on going to Palestine. Small or large, the number is unimportant. What is needed is proof that our concern for the fate of a dispossessed people is generous enough to induce us to open our own doors. By an understandable paradox, it would be the most effective method we could use to pry open the doors of Palestine.

The Battle of Palestine

(In The Nation of August 3, 1946)

THE partition plan for Palestine, as it was described in the New York *Times* last Friday, is almost too bad to be believed. They story was not carried in any other paper and the full text of the plan has not been published as I write, so it is possible that the *Times* correspondent, who evidently benefited by a news leak in the Anglo-American Cabinet Committee, was misinformed as to the details. Indeed it seems almost incredible that the new committee, after weeks of labor, should have brought forth so vicious and provocative a mouse; far better to have adjourned without any decision. For the plan outlined in the *Times* invites immediate rejection by Jews as well as Arabs and is guaranteed to inflame the anger of both. It would divide the country into Zionist, Arab, and British districts with a British-controlled central government holding final and all-but-absolute power over the whole country. The Jewish and Arab areas would, says the *Times,* "have considerably less autonomy than was enjoyed by Britain's American colonies in the eighteenth century." The British would directly control defense, foreign relations, excise taxes, police, prisons, communications,

customs, civil aviation, broadcasting, and antiquities for the whole country. They would run the Jewish port of Haifa. They would also, according to the summary, retain final authority over immigration, "but the provincial governments would have the right of appeal to the United Nations Trusteeship Council"—if and when.

> The provinces would have their own assemblies but the central government would appoint speakers without whose approval no bill could become law. The executive authority in the provinces would be vested in councils of ministers appointed by the British High Commissioner. He would have emergency power to supersede a provincial government in whole or in part.

The Jewish province under the plan would be a thin strip of territory zigzagging north and east and north again, from the coast below Jaffa to the Lebanese border. It would include about 1,500 square miles, a little more than half the area proposed in the Peel partition plan in 1936. To put the final touch on this constitutional monstrosity, the report is said to provide that the admission of 100,000 homeless Jews now in European camps, urged as an immediate step by the Committee of Inquiry, be made conditional on acceptance of the "federalization" scheme.

One can only hope the full text, which may have appeared before this comment does, will dispel the fear aroused by the preliminary report. For Palestine is in no state to survive much more stupid and ill-considered treatment; politically, its condition is already desperate. Even in June when I left there it was easy to predict steadily increasing trouble. In my first article, commenting on the British Foreign Minister's speech at Bournemouth, I wrote: "Reading this, one realizes how little Bevin has learned from the [Anglo-American] inquiry, indeed from the long record of British colonial policy: he still believes that order is a prerequisite to policy, an idea easily converted into the theory that order is a substitute for policy. This mistake was responsible for the Black and Tan terror in Ireland, for the Amritsar massacre, and for a dozen other bloody events easy to recall. If persisted in, it will have the same ugly results in Palestine." The prognosis took no particular foresight, but events have borne it out more precisely and rapidly than I could have guessed then.

First came the British raids on the Zionist organi-

zations and the arrest of leading officials of the Jewish Agency, clearly announcing the intention of the government to create a situation which would rule out early application of the Inquiry report. Second, the bombing of the King David hotel. This stupid crime cannot be condoned on grounds of intolerable provocation, nor can the Irgun try to hide behind alleged "warnings" which are unprovable and have been flatly denied by the British. The bombing was calculated with nicety to hamstring the efforts of Zionist leaders, in Palestine and London, to crack the fatal circle of terror and reprisal. Just as the British drive on June 29 weakened the influence of the moderate leaders over their Jewish followers, so the Irgun bombing weakened their position vis-a-vis the British authorities. But it is impossible to doubt, none the less, that the first tragic error played an important part in bringing about the second. Palestinian Jews, seeing their leaders in jail and their defense organization threatened with suppression and the seizure of its weapons, undoubtedly moved closer to the position that counsels of moderation had failed and violence was inevitable. Terrorism began to take on the dangerous and attractive guise of justified reprisal.

Representatives of the Agency and other Jewish leaders have expressed unqualified condemnation of the bomb outrage. Whether they will officially cooperate in rounding up members of the terrorist organizations has not been decided as I write. But whatever they say or do, their efforts will be effective only in the degree to which their prestige is reestablished by action in London. They cannot be discredited by continued failure and still be expected to win their followers to a new trust in the virtues of restraint. They cannot say: "Look, we have got nowhere; but will you please lay down your arms and leave everything to us and the British?"

The latest White Paper was clearly intended to justify the British army's raid on the Jewish Agency and Haganah. The evidence it presents of acts of violence condoned and even supported by the Zionist officials and of limited cooperation between the Agency and terrorist groups would indicate, if proved valid, that the undeclared war in Palestine has partly closed the ranks of the Jewish "resistance forces."

The Jewish Agency has indignantly denied the authenticity of the incriminating telegrams published in the White Paper, and no one has a right to accept them on their face value. The mood of British of-

ficials as I encountered it in Palestine is one which would lead them to give ready credence to fabricated evidence of Zionist conspiracy. But, true or false, the document may well serve to justify British toughness in the mind of the general public. Unfortunately, it will at the same time blur the issue, for the common or strap-hanging reader will not make nice distinctions between Jewish violence that might at least have had some military purpose, and violence that had no reason other than sheer terror. The broader effect of the White Paper will be to discredit, along with the "dissidents," men who have tried to carry on the fight with as little bloodshed and general destruction as possible.

JEWISH LEADERS ARE MILITANT

Britain's strategy of repression and delay has turned every Jewish leader into a militant; even those known as "moderates" unanimously and openly back illegal efforts to circumvent the immigration restrictions and resist military measures. But if the British intend to offer concessions in Palestine—in other words, if the new proposals from London turn out to be more generous and realistic than the *Times'* story indicates —it would seem reckless to toss into disrepute the Jewish leaders still capable of compromise. Such men are not expendable. Nothing but their prompt rehabilitation will prevent power from slipping into the hands of the elements whose anger and intransigence they have attempted to control. If that happens, the struggle in Palestine can only become more and more bloody and embittered.

For Jews are not Arabs, full of noisy threats but incapable of united, organized, sustained action. And the Jews of today are not the Jews of 1936 to 1939, so eager to prove their pacific and constructive intentions that they all but fell backward in their effort to avoid violence. Today the Jews trust no one but themselves. They are organized and prepared. They believe that they are fighting, not just for their families and their homeland as in the thirties, but for the survival of their people. The horror of the past six years is alive in every Jew in Palestine whether he suffered it in his own person or through the bodies and minds of his fellow Jews in Europe. His feeling is inflamed by every sign of easy indifference, in Britain or elsewhere, to the fate of the remnant of refugees in Europe. It is reinforced by each boatload of survivors that slips into Haifa harbor.

The impact of Jewish Palestine strikes you in full

force the moment you cross the Lebanese border. Perhaps that is the best way to meet it, for with Lebanon as a background, Palestine takes on a special quality; the contrast is startling. In "free" Lebanon, the Christian community lives in a state of constant apprehension and constraint. In British-ruled Palestine, the Jews are obviously a "free" people. I had expected to find courage and determination, even confidence, for it is out of these ingredients that the miracle of Jewish Palestine has been compounded. But I was surprised to find the Jews "free" in the full moral meaning of the word. Where Christians in Lebanon discuss in unhappy undertones their chance of survival, reduced to the thinnest sliver by the ousting of the French, Jews in Palestine talk openly, without restraint, in not-too-well-modulated voices, about the whole state of affairs in their occupied country. Their press is free as the wind, until it is censored or suspended; in Lebanon the press, with a few notable exceptions, is both timid and corrupt. The Lebanese Christians expect to be submerged in a Moslem flood if they are not rescued by some outside agency. The Jews walk the earth of Palestine as if they belonged there, not like refugees or immigrants. This phenomenon of Jewish freedom in one of the world's least free lands gives the visitor an impression of solidity and permanence which every other circumstance tries vainly to erase.

I talked to political leaders in Palestine—several of them now in prison—and to men and women in a dozen or more collective farms and cooperatives. I saw refugees from extermination camps serving their apprenticeship in the colonies. I saw Jews at work in factories owned by Histadruth, the labor federation. I visited the hospital and the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus. I talked to the newspaper men and women of Jerusalem. The sum of these varied contacts produced a surprisingly homogenous impression upon me. And since this article cannot deal in details, I shall try to make a composite of the attitudes I find recorded in my notes.

First, the assumption that the survivors of Nazi terror would eventually surely get to Palestine. Not a single Jew even suggested that the immigration could be stopped. Legally or illegally, under protection or as smuggled goods, the D.P.'s would come and the other would-be refugees would follow, and all Palestine Jews would help them.

A leader in Haifa asked me if no American shipowner could be found who would go into refugee-

running on a big scale. He pointed out that we were not bound by Britain's restrictions, and marvelled that no American Jew had yet launched such an enterprise.

Every Jew openly defended illegal action to assist the refugees in landing and prevent their deportation if that should again be attempted.

Every institution, from the magnificent Hadassah hospital to individual homes in cooperative farms, was preparing to make room for the 100,000 or whatever number, smaller or greater, might arrive. New quarters were being built in collectives; new land acquired within the strangling limits of the White Paper restrictions. Plans for training and settling the future arrivals were rapidly taking shape, together with realistic preparations to provide for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of people who have been seriously damaged by the horrors they have lived through.

Second, the determination of Jewish Palestine to survive at whatever cost. I have said the Jews are now all militants. What this means in practice is that they are prepared to fight for the right to control their own institutions and decide their own destiny. I put it in these imprecise terms because Jews disagree about the exact political basis on which their future should rest. Most of them, of course, want a democratic state with a Jewish majority within Palestine's present boundaries. An earnest minority wants a bi-national state, equally balanced in population and political power between Jews and Arabs. Some Jews are quite prepared to accept a partition plan which would limit the Homeland to an area containing a Jewish majority or able to attain a majority when the 100,000 have been added. The suggestion of a democratic federated state embracing separate Jewish and Arab administrative areas would be regarded by many Jews as an unhappy but acceptable compromise. The proposal set forth in the *Times* would be rejected by both these groups.

NO SURRENDER OF BASIC RIGHTS

No Jew I talked to would agree that the community should surrender its basic right of self-government and self-defense. Training for defense is as nearly compulsory as social pressure can make it. Every young person gives a year's service to the community, and if he is needed for the defense forces, that is where he goes. No secret is made of the existence and activities of Haganah; the fact that it is out-

lawed under British regulations merely induces a moderate discretion in talking about it.

Jews are filled with bitter contempt for the government's condemnation of "illegal armed forces." For Haganah supplied the British army with thousands of able fighters. The chairman of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Bernard Joseph, told me that the recruiting drive of the Zionist organizations was limited only by British reluctance to accept Jewish soldiers in numbers so totally disproportionate to the handful of Arabs who served. Haganah was, of course, fully recognized during the Arab raids in the late thirties. It was this force, then ill-equipped and poorly trained, that defended the scattered settlements while British troops concentrated on the maintenance of general order and the protection of pipe lines. Today Haganah has come to be looked upon not only as a defense organization to be held in readiness for possible future trouble with the Arabs, but as an Army of Liberation upon which the Jews will depend if negotiations fail and the British try to maintain the status quo by force of arms.

There are other things the Jews want.

They are passionately eager to reclaim the land; one of the reasons partition would be a hard concession to make is that it would endanger if not end the hope of putting into effect the Jordan Valley plan and other large-scale projects designed to open great desert areas for farming.

They want to raise the standard of living of the whole country and level up to their own the standard of the Arabs. This is partly altruistic; partly it is in order to make possible an economic and political stability which can only be reached if the Arab masses are somehow drawn into the twentieth century.

Some Jews, wiser than the majority, want to make common cause with other threatened minority groups in the Arab states—particularly with their neighbors, the Christians of Lebanon.

But the basic desires of the Jews I talked with are wrapped up in the first two attitudes I have described. Put together they were expressed briefly by one of the wisest Palestinian leaders. He said to me: "Under no circumstances will we give up. We will fight to open Palestine to all Jews who want to come. We will fight to maintain Jewish Palestine. We have no other choice. We cannot go on from here. This is the stopping place—the end of the road. We will stay here or die."

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